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Claude Kitchin's Statement on the Nation's Preparedness--He Gives Facts

Mr. Editor:

The SEVEN SEAS MAGAZINE, the organ of the Navy League (the organization which has created, by deception and misrepresentation, the apparently big sentiment for the militarism and navalism now proposed, and which seems to have stamped many patriotic, and usually levelheaded people) declared in its October issue that I had the right "to vote for or against" the preparedness measure, but that I had "neither the right nor should I be allowed even to discuss it in the House," etc. I trust, however, that the press of my State, though most of it differ widely with me, will not refuse the privilege which I ask, to express through it to the people some of the reasons for my position and give SOME OF THE FACTS with respect to the question which has been withheld from, or certainly not given to the public. I ask this privilege, with confidence that it will be granted, especially in view of the fact that many of the State papers have severely criticized me, some going to the extent of bitterly denouncing me. I have no criticism to make of the press and the people in the State who differ with me. Having heard only one side, and owing to the tons of literature of deception and misrepresentation on the subject, being poured out daily to the people by the metropolitan press and magazines—many, perhaps, innocently—and by the so-called "Patriotic Societies," of which the Navy League is the head, it is but natural that a large majority of the people should oppose my position. With your permission, I shall now proceed to give some of the facts and reasons which impel me to oppose the big military and naval program which will be proposed to Congress.

1. As to the actual condition of our Navy.

All the talk and writings by the press and the so-called "Patriotic Societies" about our "utter helplessness," our "dangerous unpreparedness," our "defenseless condition," our "growing weakness," our "having fallen to the third or fourth grade of inferiority in naval strength," etc., is pure tommy-rot, BASED NOT ON A SINGLE FACT.

Let it be first understood that in the "Preparedness" program the Navy of Great Britain is eliminated. This was so testified by the Secretary of the Navy, Admiral Fletcher, and other naval experts, and even by Hobson, in the hearings before the Naval Committee at the last Session of Congress, all declaring that we do not need or desire a Navy as strong as hers. Notwithstanding the metropolitan press, magazine writers and the "Patriotic Societies" and our Navy Year-Book (which was exposed in the last Congress, and will be so exposed in the next, as unreliable and misleading, THE FACT IS, that we have built, in the building of the STRONGEST AND MOST POWERFUL NAVY IN THE WORLD, except that of Great Britain (which is eliminated as above stated), OUR NAVY IS STRONGER THAN THAT OF GERMANY, FAR SUPERIOR TO THAT OF FRANCE, MORE THAN TWICE AS STRONG AS THAT OF JAPAN OR ANY OF THE OTHER NATIONS.

Admiral Fletcher, the highest active officer in the Navy, Commander of the Atlantic Fleet, the man who will have to do the fighting if any is to be done, (whose judgment on naval subjects the Secretary of the Navy, before the Naval Committee, declared he had sooner take than that of any man in the world) expressly declared, at the naval hearings during the last session of Congress, that we had a Navy, "SUPERIOR TO THAT OF GERMANY OR ANY OTHER NATION, EXCEPT GREAT BRITAIN." In answer to the question, "If in a war with Germany, could our Navy successfully resist that of Germany?" he answered "YES." Captain Winterhalter, another naval expert, testified: "JUDGE WITHERSPOON HAS PROVED THAT OUR NAVY IS SUPERIOR TO THAT OF GERMANY AND LARGER WITHERSPOON, Admiral Badger, Ex-Commander of the Atlantic Fleet (a member of the General Board of the Navy) declared that no one had ever heard him say that "Germany had a superior Navy to ours."

The facts of record, the tests laid down by naval experts here and abroad, and the naval authorities of the world (all of which I have before me as I write) confirm the truth of this testimony.

The armored fleet of Germany, consisting of battleships, dreadnaughts and predreadnaughts, armored cruisers and battle-cruisers (built and building) in number is 52 (to say nothing of the vessels lost since January 1, 1915.) The fleet of the United States, of the same vessels, is in number fifty-six, with over 40,000 more tonnage. (Number and tonnage, however, are not the criterion of superiority.) Of twenty of Germany's battleships listed by our Navy Year-Book, sixteen are not able to go more than 1,000 miles from base to engage in naval warfare. Not one of the sixteen carry coal enough to go from Hamburg or Bremen to within five hundred miles of New York and return (to say nothing about being employed in a naval engagement.) The Oregon, which some of our naval experts say

is obsolete, and not listed by our Navy Year-Book (the Indiana and Massachusetts not listed also) in every characteristic of a fighting ship (bigger guns, heavier armor, stronger ship) is far superior to ANY ONE OF THE TWENTY GERMAN BATTLESHIPS LISTED BY OUR YEAR-BOOK. Four of the German ships listed by our Year-Book as dreadnaughts are in reality not dreadnaughts, and are shown by one of the highest naval authorities in the world (Jane's Fighting Ships) to be DEFECTIVE, UNSUCCESSFUL SHIPS, and so known to be by every student of naval affairs. The last five dreadnaughts authorized by Congress are superior to any six dreadnaughts Germany has, built or building. Our ships are better larger, stronger and more heavily armored. Our guns are larger, stronger and more effective. Of the big guns of the ships, twelve inches and over, we have 284, while Germany has only 194 (built and building.)

If the Navy of Great Britain is to be eliminated in the "Preparedness" program, which our naval experts say it should be, and if we have a navy now SUPERIOR TO THAT OF GERMANY OR ANY OTHER NATION IN THE WORLD, except Great Britain, FOR WHOM OR AGAINST WHOM DO WE PROPOSE TO PREPARE by the fabulous increase of our naval appropriations which the proposed program requires?

WE ARE PREPARED.

Instead of "our Navy growing weaker," as the metropolitan press, the "Patriotic Societies," and the jingo and war traffickers would have the people believe, it is GROWING BIGGER, STRONGER, MORE EFFICIENT AND BETTER EQUIPPED EVERY YEAR. In the two years of Wilson's Administration the naval building program authorized is TWICE AS LARGE AND COSTLY AS THE LAST TWO YEARS OF TAIT'S ADMINISTRATION AND LARGER AND MORE COSTLY BY \$8,000,000 THAN THE ENTIRE FOUR YEARS OF ROOSEVELT'S LAST TERM AND PRACTICALLY AS LARGE AND COSTLY AS THE ENTIRE FOUR YEARS OF TAIT'S ADMINISTRATION. There is today OVER 50 PER CENT MORE CONSTRUCTION GOING ON FOR OUR NAVY THAN ON THE 1ST DAY OF MARCH, 1913, or at any other time in the history of our country. We have nearly 100 per cent more torpedoes, mines, mine layers, powder and other munitions than we had on the 1st day of March, 1913, and steadily increasing them. We have under Mr. Wilson's and Mr. Daniels' Administration, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS, THE FULL COMPLIMENT OF ENLISTED MEN AUTHORIZED BY LAW. WE ARE PREPARING.

In view of the foregoing facts, was not President Wilson right when he said in his message to Congress, December, 1914, in opposing the program of the Hobsons and Gardners: "LET THERE BE NO MISCONCEPTION. THE COUNTRY HAS BEEN MISINFORMED. WE HAVE NOT BEEN NEGLIGENT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE."

2. As to the enormity of the proposed program--what it is:

The heretofore large and growing expenditures for our Navy had aroused the people of the country into asking, "where shall it end?" Secretary Daniels, in his report to the last session of Congress, December, 1914, said (and he was but substantially repeating what had been said in the British Parliament, the German Reichstag, the French Assembly, and by prominent statesmen the world over relative to the armament expenditures of their respective countries for the last several years): "The naval appropriations in our own country HAVE DOUBLED IN A DOZEN YEARS and have gone up by leaps and bounds in other countries. IF THIS MAD RIVALRY IN CONSTRUCTION GOES ON THE BURDEN WILL BECOME TOO HEAVY FOR ANY NATION TO BEAR." In his report of December, 1913, he says: "The growing cost of dreadnaughts, of powder and of everything that makes an efficient Navy gives reason to pause. THE HEAVY EXPENSE commands national and international consideration. Ten years ago our largest battleships cost \$5,282,000. The next dreadnaught will cost \$14,044,000." (The dreadnaughts hereafter to be authorized will cost from \$18,000,000 to \$20,000,000, and in an interview the Secretary says all ship materials and munitions of war have gone up over 30 per cent.) He asks "When is this ACCELERATING EXPENDITURE TO BE REDUCED?" It is not hastened by appeals for the peaceful settlement of national differences, the day is not far distant when the GROWING BURDEN OF TAXATION FOR EXCESSIVE WAR AND NAVAL EXPENDITURES WILL CALL A HALT."

Now, in the face of the deplorable truth recited by the Secretary; in the face of the fact that we have a Navy superior to that of Germany or any other nation, except that of Great Britain; in the face of the fact, that our Navy is growing larger, stronger and better equipped than ever before; in the face of the fact, as the

President declared both in his message to Congress December last and in his recent Manhattan Club speech, "WE ARE THREATENED FROM NO QUARTER," the proposed "Preparedness" program at one bound--one year--INCREASES our already immensely large naval appropriations MORE THAN OUR TOTAL INCREASE FOR THE LAST FOURTEEN YEARS; more than the INCREASE BY GERMANY THE WHOLE FIFTEEN YEARS PRECEDING THE EUROPEAN WAR, AND MORE THAN THE COMBINED INCREASE OF ALL THE NATIONS IN THE WORLD IN ANY ONE YEAR IN THEIR HISTORY (in times of peace!)

The five-year program INCREASES OUR NAVAL APPROPRIATION OVER FORTY TIMES MORE THAN THE INCREASE BY GERMANY IN FIVE YEARS PRECEDING THE EUROPEAN WAR; and \$200,000,000 MORE THAN THE COMBINED INCREASE OF ALL THE NATIONS IN THE WORLD FOR THE FIVE YEARS PRECEDING THE EUROPEAN WAR; and OVER \$50,000,000 MORE THAN THE COMBINED INCREASE OF ALL THE NATIONS IN THE WORLD FOR THE WHOLE PERIOD OF TEN YEARS IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING THE EUROPEAN WAR!

Add to this the fact that prior to the beginning of the European War we were expending annually on our Navy from \$20,000,000 to \$30,000,000 MORE THAN GERMANY OR ANY OTHER NATION (except Great Britain) was expending on its Navy. FOR THE TEN YEARS PRECEDING THE EUROPEAN WAR WE HAD EXPENDED ON OUR NAVY OVER \$300,000,000 MORE THAN GERMANY OR ANY OTHER NATION (EXCEPT GREAT BRITAIN) HAD EXPENDED ON ITS NAVY. And yet the metropolitan press, the magazine writers, the "Patriotic Societies," and the jingo and war traffickers would frighten the country into the belief that we have a little, puny, egg-shell of a Navy!

The five-year naval program calls for AN INCREASE OF \$500,000,000--\$100,000,000 INCREASE a year--which, including the inevitable incidental expenses for expanding the whole naval establishment in order to accommodate the program, will reach \$600,000,000 or over by the time the five years expires! This is all EXTRA--IN ADDITION TO the large appropriations we have been annually making.

The Army four-year program demands \$450,000,000 INCREASE, over \$100,000,000 a year EXTRA, being an INCREASE OF MORE THAN 100 per cent OVER OUR annual Army appropriations! ALL EXTRA APPROPRIATIONS, BE IT REMEMBERED, EXTRA TAXES MUST BE PAID BY THE PEOPLE, BE IT REMEMBERED!

Before leaving the subject of the enormity of the proposed program, I desire to make a further observation: At the expiration of the five-year period for the program this country will then be EXPENDING ON ITS NAVY AND ARMY MORE THAN ANY NATION IN THE WORLD IN TIMES OF PEACE EVER EXPENDED ON PEACE AND NAVY; more than England, with her navalism, more than Russia or Germany, with their huge militarism. At the beginning of the European War Germany was expending for past wars and preparations for wars (on its Army and Navy) 55 per cent. of the total amount of revenues collected, Japan 45 per cent; Great Britain 37 per cent; France 35 per cent. THE UNITED STATES OVER 60 PER CENT. With the proposed MILITARY AND NAVAL PROGRAM ENACTED into law the UNITED STATES WILL BE EXPENDING OVER 70 per cent OF ITS TOTAL REVENUES--that is, OUT OF EVERY \$100.00 COLLECTED FROM THE PEOPLE OVER \$70.00 WILL GO INTO MILITARISM AND NAVALISM, including pensions leaving LESS THAN \$30.00 FOR ALL OTHER FUNCTIONS OF OUR GOVERNMENT AND FOR ALL OTHER BENEFITS OF THE PEOPLE.

3. As to the condition of our Treasury and its revenues and extra taxation required.

The condition of our Treasury and our revenue and the necessities of the Government are less able now to permit increased appropriations than ever before. The Treasury has felt most heavily the burden of the present war. Our general surplus fund of over \$150,000,000 is monthly disappearing; our deficits are annual and monthly; our revenues have diminished; we have strained the nerves of the Government to get sufficient revenue to meet its ordinary expenses; we have been forced to levy an emergency tax; our deficits still exist; our revenues still insufficient. After the expiration of the present emergency tax December 31, 1915, we will be faced with deficits for the coming year of at least \$117,000,000. This is upon the assumption that not a dollar of increased appropriation will be made for any purpose over the last year's appropriation. Yet I understand that there will be from \$30,000,000 to \$40,000,000 increase asked other than the Army and Navy in-

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crease.) This \$117,000,000 deficit is upon the further assumption that Congress will repeal the sugar free list provision of the Underwood Act, which goes into effect May 1st, 1916 (which itself will impose \$100,000,000 burden upon the people.) For this program of militarism and navalism--euphoniously called by its advocates "national defense" or "preparedness" program--\$200,000,000 annual increase of taxation IS REQUIRED. This, added to the deficit above mentioned, makes \$177,000,000 additional "national taxation" (even with the "free-sugar" clause repealed,) which must be raised, on the assumption, too, there will not be a dollar increase in any other appropriation over that of last year. This is THREE TIMES LARGER ANNUAL INCREASE THAN WAS EVER REQUIRED OR RAISED (and practically all of it must be raised by direct or excise taxes) than AT ANY TIME IN THE HISTORY OF OUR GOVERNMENT, except during the Civil War. No man in the Administration or in the Ways and Means Committee, although for months they have wearied their wits over it, has yet been able to solve even the beginning of the problem of raising this enormous increase of revenue. I have had hundreds of suggestions as to how to raise it. All the suggestions combined would not begin to raise the amount. Every suggestion has been, however, to raise the tax on the other fellow and on the other fellow's business or product and not on his. When the Ways and Means Committee begins to attempt to frame measures for raising the revenue, and especially when the people begin to pay the taxes for this enormous increase, they will then, perhaps, realize what the program means. I have had experience enough with taxation to know that those who are howling most loudly now for the big Army and Navy program will protest and howl most wildly against any measure which may be attempted or proposed for increase of taxes.

(Continued on page 4.)

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